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AUTHOR Klenk, Warren W.
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ABSTRACT

This literature review examines the challenges and issues likely to confront a new college president in his or her first year in the role. An introduction notes that the current literature on the first year of a college presidency is very scant and that an in-depth look which takes into consideration the president in the institutional context and culture, subterranean personnel issues, and the inherited budget--as well as expectations of boards of directors--is needed. A following section suggests that the best way for a new president to uncover the themes of a particular institution is to develop an understanding of that college's own culture. In a review of the literature that exists on the college presidency several topics are discussed. The first topic is the task of understanding the institution's culture and possible strategies for doing that. Other topics include the need to understand the institution's critical personnel issues and how to handle an inherited top management team, understanding the financial situation and structure, and the critical relationship between the board of directors and the newly hired president. Following the literature review a discussion of the literature limitations notes the great deal of work to be done. Included are 25 references. (JB)

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The College Presidency: The First Year

Submitted by:

Warren W. Klenk
150 Cassatt Road
Berwyn, PA 19312

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Introduction

The current literature on the College Presidency lacks sufficient research into the issues facing and actions taken by a new college or university president, during the critical first year. Writers such as Bensimon, Fisher, Flawn and Plante touch on the beginning period of the presidency, but, when they have finished their explorations and explanations, they still have not presented an accurate picture of what the new president finds each and every day.

Using the metaphor of one moving rocks around in the backyard, the new college president is a gardener revamping the collegial landscape of the institution. The new president, with the movement of each rock, will find rich, luscious soil mixed with worms and snakes trying to shield themselves from the new lustre thrust upon them. The success of the gardener will depend on just how well he or she handles the rich soil and the snakes in the garden.

Statement of Purpose

The literature is not rich in information concerning the early part of the president's tenure. Most reseach, on the condition of the universities which presidents inherit, deals with anecdotal stories of singular issues which lead to the president's demise. Other studies tend to focus on leadership style, management techniques and superordinate, peer and subordinate relationships, most of these studies rooted in quantitative methods. With this in mind, perhaps more in-depth research of the new college president is needed; one which looks at the president **in situ**

surrounded by the current college's culture, the subterranean personnel issues, the precarious status of the inherited "balanced budget," and the group that hired the new president, the board of directors.

Statement of Need

The job of the college president, says Fisher, is arguably the toughest job in America, as well as one of the most important.[1] What is it that happens doing this job that does not allow for frank discussion of the issues of culture, finances, personnel and the board of directors? Clark Kerr acknowledges this with his observation that the literature on the higher education presidency is sparse . . . mainly it is sparse because presidents and board members do not want to speak to researchers about what goes on behind closed doors.[2] Why is it that neither presidents nor boards have, to this point, written about the dynamics of the above four factors? Bensimon, in discussing the academic climate in which the new president attempts to lead, presents this telling statement:

> This brings us to the question of how a president can uncover the themes of a campus--the constructed realities--that will not make themselves known in the

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[1]James L. Fisher, The Board and the President (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1991), 1.

[2]Clark Kerr, "Presidents Make a Difference: Strengthening Leadership in Colleges and Universities," The Journal of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges September/October (1984), 20.

> appearance of the campus, in the organizational chart, or even in what people say.[3]

Bensimon and other researchers say that the only way for a president to be able to uncover the themes is to dispose of the old efficiency-based managerial styles in favor of understanding the cultural factors of a university.

Review of the Literature

The literature on the college presidency contains many articles which begin with astute observations about the role of the president, but seem to get sidetracked into safe advice for the presidents.

For example, John W. Ryan, President of Indiana University, begins a presentation on "The Mosaic of the College and University Presidency," with a promising premise of

> Each president brings to office his or her own image, memory, and a set of expectations, and then finds that varying roles unfold. One thing is likely: no one on the search committee warns a candidate about these things. And yet, "everyone knows" what a president does -- that kind of conventional wisdom can drive a president to distraction.[4]

Instead of a close look at the presidential dilemma, the reader is taken on a trip of external constituencies with which the president

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[3]Estella M. Bensimon, "The New President and Understanding the Campus as a Culture," New Directions For Institutional Research no. 68. Winter (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1990), 75-86.

[4]John W. Ryan, "The Mosaic of the College and University Presidency," Educational Record, Spring (1984): 20

should be involved from government agencies, to corporate boards, to high school teachers and students.

In looking at the post-war college presidency, Paul Sharp gives a historical perspective on the changing roles which he interprets in terms of leadership theory:

> Presidential leadership as well as management are conditional. They are integral parts of a time, a place, a culture, and a degree of control. Among whatever qualities of leadership in presidential performance each generation demanded as essential these four factors were present.[5]

Although these factors are essential, the literature has remained in the realm of leadership theory and seems to have shied from the challenge of integrating these four factors. The following review of the literature will deal with the presidency outside of leadership theory and in the context of time, place, culture, and the degree of control afforded each new president.

Need to Understand the Cultural Factors

Upon assuming a college presidency, the new leader must pause to realize that the institution which is about to be led does have a history and a story all of its own. Daft and Weick see it as:

> For more than three hundred new college and university presidents who take office annually, the experience of arriving at a new institution is one where they literally must wade into the ocean of events that surround

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[5]Paul L. Sharp, "American College Presidents Since World War II, Educational Record, Spring (1984): 16.

> the organization and actively try to make sense of them.[6]

How does the new president make sense of anything? Bensimon offers the new president the opportunity to see the organization through a new lens -- cultural entities. In order to make the transition easier for the college community, Bensimon proposes three things which the new college president can do:

> •What does it mean to understand the campus as culture?
> •What are the means of understanding an institution as a culture?
> •How can institutional researchers help new presidents acquire a cultural perspective as a way of knowing their institution? [7]

According to Bensimon, Tierney, and Dill, when a new president takes office an immediate need to begin to understand the culture takes place, using the literary construct of **in media res**. Like an alien visiting earth for the first time, Bensimon suggests that as a new president, one needs to learn about shared understanding and how it evolved over time between the many actors in the culture.

In his "Diary of a New College President," Arthur Levine writes that throughout the entire first month, "I have had meetings scheduled with faculty, administrators, students, trustees, local residents and the press."[8] These types of meetings, in Bensimon's

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[6]R.L. Daft and K.E. Weick, "Toward a Model of Organizations as Interpretation of Systems," Academy of Management Review 9 (2), (1984): 284.

[7]Bensimon, op.cit., 78.

[8]Arthur Levine, "Diary of a New College President: Surviving the First Year," Change, Jan/Feb. (1984): 11.

view, help the new president to hear and process information.[9] Thus, it becomes extremely important for the new president to reduce the sense of anxiety on campus because having a new president creates a great deal of uncertainty among the college community.[10]

Adding to the uncertainty and confusion will be the fact that the culture, the new president is about to inherit, has some built-in contradictions. According to Flawn:

> The board will see you as their chief executive officer. However, the faculty, staff, and students will see you as the mayor of university city and responsible to them. Even though they have not elected you, they will behave as though you are an elected official.[11]

This observation can help to explain also why so many people came calling on President Levine during his first month in office. Taking the description of the president as mayor one step further, Plante and Caret describe the activities of the faculty at one university during a presidential search:

> Predictably, the search committee named to recommend his successor were lobbied heavily and successfully to bring to the institution someone whose style differed in many if not all respects from that of this one-minute manager.[12]

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[9]Bensimon, op.cit., 80.

[10]Ibid., 81.

[11]Peter T. Flawn, A Primer for University Presidents: Managing the Modern University (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990) 15.

[12]Patricia R. Plante with Robert L. Caret, "An Administrator Will Experience a Honeymoon," Myths and Realities of Academic Administration (New York: Macmillian Publishing and the American Council on Education, 1989) 5.

view, help the new president to hear and process information.[9] Thus, it becomes extremely important for the new president to reduce the sense of anxiety on campus because having a new president creates a great deal of uncertainty among the college community.[10]

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[12]Patricia R. Plante with Robert L. Caret, "An Administrator Will Experience a Honeymoon," Myths and Realities of Academic Administration (New York: Macmillian Publishing and the American Council on Education, 1989) 5.

Obviously, if the president is seen as a mayor who must please many constituencies, rather than lead, then all of the special interest groups will certainly try to meet with the new president. Fisher describes this situation accurately in his studies:

> The president is often left teetering between the faculty on the one side and the board on the other. He is accountable *for* the faculty and *to* the board, but without sufficient wherewithal to satisfy either.[13]

While the president is "teetering" in the board room between not only roles, mayor or president, but also groups, board and faculty, Dan Perlman, a former university president, writes

> that students, faculty members, alumni, deans and so on have multiple roles, and may be members of several constituencies. The dean may be also a tennis partner of the board chair, or their spouses may have been classmates. A web of connections provides a complicated backdrop in which the new college president must live on the edge.[14]

In an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, James A. Perkins, former president of Cornell University, predicted that

> the president will become an elected official, nominated by the university senate and approved by the board, for a limited term. He will be the consensus-maker, the broker between constituencies, the link--but not the only link--between the board and the senate.[15]

As soon as the new president moves into the executive mansion, then, the magi of the special interests will begin calling on the unsuspecting leader. Plante calls this the testing period for the special interests, not only will they administer the test, they and

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[13]Fisher, op. cit., 1.

[14]Daniel H. Perlman, "The Paradoxes of the Presidency," The AAHE Bulletin 42.3 (1989): 5-6.

[15]Phillip W. Semas, "The Perilous Presidencies," The Chronicle of Higher Education IX.8 (1975): 4.

others will be eagerly awaiting the opportunity to grade the tests.[16]

Essentially the type of sagacious gifts brought by the special interests, who usually were outside the search process, represent:

- •The All Eyes Are On You Message
- •We Had All Been Led to Believe Message
- •You Will Destroy Message[17]

These are the admonitions of various contingencies which will bring to the new leader's attention their own purity of heart, dedication to the university's cause, and the hope that no one's position is in jeopardy, or worse, changed. Whether it is in-fighting between faculty for the chair position, the older teaching faculty wanting classroom priorities established over research, or an influential alumnus seeking to protect a long-time staffer from misfortune, all will come to the presidential mansion.

The Need to Understand the Critical Personnel Issues

While the new president is experiencing the initial time in office being visited by the myriad stakeholders in the institution, important decisions must be made about the personnel necessary to place in the administration in working order. If the demise of the predecessor was because of failure based on performance, the newly minted president may see the management team as being as culpable as any one. It is certain that the prior president's failures were

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[16]Plante, op. cit., 8.

[17]Ibid., 8

not done without assistance from incapable management. Flawn suggests to aspiring college presidents that during the interview process to try to get a reading on how they (the board) view the sitting vice-presidents.[18]

Why is this important? Administrators work for and report to the president. Fisher points out that under optimal circumstances

> administrators have three choices: support the president, try to change his or her mind or resign. The president should try to convey this concept of administration to all administrative officers and the entire college community during the first week in office.[19]

With this in mind, it becomes important that the new president should have opportunity to select the management team from the beginning. Although it sometimes seems to be conventional wisdom that when a new president is named, the top administrators offer their resignations. This is far from actuality. Flawn discusses this issue in detail:

> As a general rule, any vice-president that you might want to keep will submit his or her resignation to you the first day that you are in office. Those that do not probably feel secure in their own constituencies and personal relations with board members.[20]

This will be, more than likely, the first important test, which the new college president will have and it will occur before the first day of work. Glade hints at the problem when she writes that the

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[18]Flawn, op. cit., 10.

[19]James. L. Fisher, Power of the Presidency (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company & the American Council on Education, 1984) 75.

[20]Flawn, op. cit., 10.

new president "will have a long time before the new president finds where all the bodies are buried." [21]

Flawn urges all new college presidents to have a clear, preferably, written understanding with the board that hires them about their authority to hire or replace vice-presidents.[22] Fisher sees the failure to grasp the power of hiring and firing the management team as one of the first steps in undermining the legitimacy of power which the president needs so desperately to lead.[23]

From the reseacher's point of view, Bensimon notes that no matter how determined a new college president is to turn around a institution, he or she cannot do it all alone.[24] However, at this point, Bensimon will address the situation of the top administration in terms quite unlike Flawn and Fisher. First of all, Birnbaum explores the responsibility of the new president to negotiate with the former president's people:

> Collaboration with and cooperation of the existing administrative infrastructure requires that the president and administrative officers negotiate their mutual roles.[25]

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[21]Marian L. Glade, "The President-Trustee Relationship or, What Every New President Should Know about the Board, New Directions for Institutional Research no.68 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers: 1990) 18.

[22]Flawn, op. cit., 10.

[23]Fisher, Power, 37.

[24]Bensimon, 80.

[25]Ibid., 81.

This sounds fair enough; and, perhaps, Flawn and Fisher could agree with this recommendation, but, continuing on Bensimon will caution the new president with:

> However, unless a new president first understands the constructed reality of the inherited administrative officers, such negotiation is unlikely to take place.[26]

Bensimon does not even deal with the thought that maybe the administrative team at the top level should feel compelled to adjust to the management style of the new president.

Further, Bensimon calls upon the new president to explore the answers to a variety of questions:

> •How do administrative officers perceive their role?
> •How do administrative officers define their operating style?
> •What beliefs maintain the operating style of the administrative officers?
> •What are the rituals and routines associated with the operating style of the administrative officers?[27]

If one refers to Fisher's three choices for the vice-presidents, is it necessary for the president to answer these questions? Continuing on with Bensimon's approach, the imposition of a new management style will increase "the likelihood that the relationship between the president and the chief officers will remain at the 'they and I' level rather than evolve in to a 'we' relationship.[28]

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[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 83.

Thus, the major personnel decisions for the president appear to be heading towards a significant crisis. Bensimon sees the collision and describes it as:

> If a president's critical decisions receive different and conflicting interpretation, the feeling among the campus community will be one of disorganization, of absence of a sense of shared purpose and direction. When these conditions prevail, it is likely that the campus will become disillusioned with the new president's leadership.[29]

Implicit in the paragraph above was that because the president failed to win over his chief administrators to his management style, the messages delivered to the various constituencies by top management are of "conflicting interpretation."

This is exactly why Flawn addresses the issue of having the approval of the board in writing prior to taking the job, that vice-presidents can be dismissed. Flawn notes that a vice-president with an agenda that differs from yours can destroy your presidency. You must engineer a departure in a decisive but graceful way.[30] Fisher says it much more succinctly: "Leave."[31]

Bensimon, unlike other writers, seems to view the vice-presidents as a constituency; as the chief messengers of the president to the oligarchical structure of the university. They should be supportive of the president's direction, in thought, word, and deed. The vice-presidents are not a consituency; they are either

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[29]Ibid., 79.

[30]Flawn, op.cit., 11.

[31]Fisher, Power, 75.

supporters and cheerleaders, or unemployed and looking for a new job.

Robert Grossman, in his 1990 study of management styles of 214 college presidents, addresses the problem of the president and the consensus and cultural strategies. Looking at the conflict, he sees boards of directors looking for a new type of president. He states from his study:

> The reality is that as competition grows and as pressures to improve services and increase enrollments become more intense, boards are finding that the consensus-building style of management, although previously effective no longer gets the job done.[32]

To conclude this section, none of the literature has dealt with the critical issue: For how long will the president be saddled with a top management team which was inherited? What is ironic here is that the literature is full of suggestions on the president's role vis a vis the presidential mansion. The literature prepares the new president for the problems that will ensue from the moment of occupancy. Many writers even suggest that the new president not take the position until the board has agreed to complete renovation and/or needed preventive maintenance on the house.

None of the researchers in the literature approach the problem of the inherited staff in terms that it may need to be replaced. Only one practicioner, Flawn, makes it an important item to be

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[32]Robert J. Grossmann, "Wanted: New Management Style," The Journal of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges September/October (1990): 34.

negotiated before accepting the position. Kauffman, also a former college president, cites in his research on new presidents,

> By the end of the first year, some presidents became aware that their future accomplishments will be limited unless they are willing to turn things upside down, to fire incompetent people, and to stay many years in order to put things back together again.[33]

The question that needs to be asked, is what are the contract limitations on replacing or dismissing the "messengers of disillusionment." Has the board or the outgoing president made legally binding contractual offers to people prior to the new president's hiring? Should the board have the responsibility for dismissing the old chief administrators prior to the starting date of the new president? Isn't the replacement of the chief administrative officers more important than the refurbishing of the presidential house?

Marion Glade sees the new first-time college president as being especially idealistic and not asking for all of the support he or she will need. Trustees don't ask questions like those above because:

> Most trustees work on the assumption that anyone bright and competent enough to guide their institution is also smart enough to look out for herself or himself and ask for what's needed. Not so.[34]

Whether or not the Reverend Theodore Hesburgh remembers accurately or writes as the result of thirty-plus years of hindsight, but, most definitely, as a practitioner, he states:

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[33]Joseph F. Kauffman, "The New College President," Educational Record 58.2 (1977): 158.

[34]Glade, op.cit., 37.

> The best time to make major changes in any organization is at the beginning of a new reign. That's when they are expected. That's when a new broom can sweep clean with the least amount of personal resentment.[35]

Unfortunately for current presidents, Hesburgh reported to a board of fellow priests at that time. However, his advice should not be diminished because of it. He, nonetheless, had to deal with the elements of the human costs of reorganization:

> The hardest thing I had to do when I became president of Notre Dame was to shunt someone aside, or to talk someone into resigning, or, worst of all, to outright fire someone...But as sympathetic to their plight as I was, I knew that if Notre Dame was ever to become the university it is today, we had to bring in new deans and start upgrading the faculty.[36]

In the course of this university-wide reorganization, he replaced the Academic Dean, who was also the brother of his predecessor. Not one to mince words, Hesburgh explains his situation as, "That was my job as I saw it."[37]

Finally, from Hesburgh's book, the following scenario portrays what might be the real negotiations, not the type which Bensimon envisions, but rather, the type Flawn knows will occur:

> At one point in all this restructuring I learned that the dean of the College of Business Administration had gathered his faculty together the day before and declared, "Well we've had two bad presidents in a row. We can't stand a third. But we probably won't have to worry about that, because we'll outlast Hesburgh."[38]

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[35]Theodore M. Hesburgh with Jerry Reedy, God, Country, Notre Dame: The Autobiography of Theodore M. Hesburgh (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1990) 65.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid., 67.

According to Hesburgh, the dean was called to the president's office the next day. After admitting that the statement was true, Hesburgh writes about the confrontation, "Then I guess you know who's finished around here."[39]

In all of the literature on the college presidency, finally, the actual admission to a firing occurs. Are researchers too close to other faculty and administrators to discuss the firing option? Are too many presidents so happy to be out of the position, that they never want to revisit the unpleasantness of these types of conversations? Does the first-year college president want to do this more than he or she is allowed? What are the hidden agreements that the president inherits from his predecessor? Surely, Hesburgh is not the only president to take this action.

Need to Understand the Financial Dealings

Referring again to Levine's "Diary of a First-Year President," he reminisces about the number of people wanting to see him with the conclusion being, "Almost everyone I meet wants something from me, usually money."[40] When a new president takes office, the critical need is to understand the fiscal stability of the institution. Unfortunately, the fund accounting method used by organizations in the non-profit sector is extremely difficult to under-

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[39]Ibid.

[40]Levine, 6.

stand, not just for the neophyte, but also for the experienced administrator who has dealt with budgets for years.

Dealing with academic budgeting process is only one part of the complexity of fund (cash) accounting. In fact, Collier and Allen report:

> Even among the constituencies with a general understanding of finance, the conventions of postsecondary education fund accounting are little appreciated... Knowledge of business or governmental conventions can often cause more confusion than would a total lack of experience in accounting.[41]

To make matters worse, those board members whose experitise may be in business accounting usually are totally baffled by the nuances of fund accounting. For example, many business people on the board of trustees might see that excess funds in the current fund as profit, thus an indicator of the fiscal health of the organization. This is not necessarily the case:

> Although an institution wants to provide for its future operating needs, (and an accumulation of excess revenues over expenditures is an important source of funds for future needs), it is not necessary for an institution to show such an excess to be considered well managed.[42]

Writing in the Harvard Business Review, Herzlinger and Sherman recommend to those who deal with nonprofit institutions that they

> should have greater familiarity with the unique requirements of nonprofit financial sturctures and accounting practices. They should not rely on famil-

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[41]D.J. Collier and R.H. Allen, "Part I: Understanding Financial Reports," Higher Education Finance Manual: Data Users Guide (Boulder, CO.: National Center For Higher Education Management Systems, 1980) 5.

[42]Ibid., 10.

iarity with business financial accounting and administration.[43]

The significance of the levels of understanding of the accounting principles of higher education indicates that the levels of misunderstanding by board members and top administrators may be greater than is believed.

The implications of this become important during the interview process when the aspiring new college president is told by the board and the search committee that the school had an excess in the budget this year and are predicting a balanced budget in the next year. They may be telling the truth due to lack of understanding. Their sin is one of nescience; a sin of not knowing, when they have the opportunity to know.

Herzlinger and Sherman present a fictional budget for Pepys College and evaluate it from a traditional managerial accounting approach. When done in this manner, the managerial accountant would give the school a clean bill of fiscal well-being, while as the authors illustrate, the school could be on the verge of bankruptcy.

In the example of Pepys College, the balance sheet does not show the exchange of funds and the interfunds obligation. This gives the illusion that the current fund is balanced while, in truth, the current fund is cash short to the tune of about

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[43]Regina E. Herzlinger and H. David Sherman, "Advantages of fund accounting in 'nonprofits,'" The Harvard Business Review 58.3 May/June (1980): 95.

$500,000.[44] Added to this is the fact that the unrestricted fund borrowed from the restricted fund. If a new president was interviewing for the post at Pepys, on the first day in office, he or she would be facing a deficit of, at least, $1.2 million with an accumulated deficit in the current fund of double that amount.

Kauffman, in his work in 1977 on new college presidents, notes, through interviews with presidents, similar situations seem to occur, stating that several new presidents were shocked about how little their governing boards seemed to know about the actual financial condition of their institutions. He further elaborates on this crisis by quoting one president who said:

> He inherited a $5 million debt from two new buildings, a declining enrollment, no endowment funds and the board had described the financial condition as "sound." He found that the board had little knowledge of the actual financial picture.[45]

Kauffman's interviews tend to demonstrate that fiduciary irresponsibility is a continuing problem which new presidents inherit. As mentioned earlier, many administrators have had some budget responsibility, however, they have no idea how the money gets into their budget. One president of a small women's college describes the situation at her school:

> In her first month on the job, for example, it bothered her greatly that members of the staff insisted they had money "in their budgets." She said that no one seemed to know the difference between having money in their budget and having money for the budget in the bank.[46]

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[44]Ibid., 97.

[45]Kauffman, 148.

[46]Ibid., 157.

So, while the faculty and staff were spending money they believed actually existed, the president also uncovered the fact that she had over $200,000 in ninety-day due notes. Kauffman summarizes her situation with this quote:

> She was also appalled at how easily one could mislead the board or faculty about the true financial picture. All one had to do was to raise the figure for "expected" fund-raising income for the year, and it appeared as though the budget would be balanced, even though there was no money in hand.[47]

All of this chicanery was a result of the gamesmanship of the outgoing president along with the treasurer to present the board of directors with the "balanced budget" for the presidential search process.

Needless to say, the problem with the financial issues confronting a new college president is formidable. It will not be until sometime in the first fiscal quarter, that the treasurer will inform the new president that the balanced budget really isn't. While the constituencies of Levine's article constantly visit, in the first month, the new president with a balanced budget may want to fund certain ideas. However, by the end of the first quarter, any new initiatives promised to the faculty and staff, more than likely, will have to be put on hold. This could be a major factor in hurting the president's credibility with certain constituencies. It is important to remember that the constituencies visited for one reason--money. If they believed, or were led to believe, that the possibility for funding was realistic, given the current budget

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[47]Ibid.

deficit, the president would have no other choice than to renege on the commitments, or worse, honor them and increase the deficit.

What this means is that if the president had made an agreement to fund half the ideas or needs, he or she initially had half the faculty mad at him or her. Now that he or she must rescind the promises made only weeks ago, then the other half of the college community will be furious. What happened to the money? Wasn't the new president given a balanced budget by the outgoing leader? How could this new president put the college in such a hole?

This type of scenario is not uncommon. The president is left holding the bag. The board goes on summer vacation. During these key first months, a new president expects that what the board tells him or her to be true, however, Kauffman found one president who not only uncovered institutional budget problems, but also how they affected his personal finances:

> The board had told him that it would pay one-half of his moving expenses, provide an automobile and refurbish the president's house which needed a lot of work.[48]

In reality what the new president discovered upon arrival was much different then had been portrayed by the board:

> When I got here, I found out that there were no funds for such matters in the college budget or anywhere else. All in all, it has been a bad scene, and they have not yet bought a car for my use. I have also spent money out of my own pocket to fix up the president's house.[49]

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[48]Ibid., 159.

[49]Ibid.

Under these types of circumstances, it is not uncommon for a new president not only to feel betrayed, but also, be unable to realize the benefits of increased salary and stature.

The psychological implications, during the crucial first several months, sets the stage for mistrust between the president and the board. But more threatening to the overall relationship is the ineffectiveness of the board to deliver on some trivial matters (again, the president's house), especially at this point when the board should be providing its strongest support to the new president. When the fiscal realities directly affect the president's personal, as well as professional well-being, the importance of the president understanding the board and its role becomes an issue immediately.

The Need to Understand The Board of Directors

The relationship between a college or university's Board of Trustees and its CEO ... is among the most crucial in an institution of higher education... This important relationship has been described as an "exchange relationship"[50]

> in which board and president are interdependent and in which they exchange a variety of intangibles . . . The point is that neither board nor president can function effectively without the other, and experience indicates that strong and effective boards and strong and effective presidents tend to go together.[51]

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[50]Glade, 13.

[51]Ibid., 18.

If the relationship is so critical, how do the abovementioned issues continue to plague colleges and their boards? In most cases, it appears that the search committees tend to focus on process more than outcome. Attempting to be collegial in the search process, boards abdicate much of the responsibility to the committee which is charged with bringing to the board "one of those faceless presidents who reportedly characterize higher education today."[52] And, because the composition of the committee becomes more of an issue than a definition of the qualities of a new president, most candidates will be interviewed by the omniscient search committee which

> includes a disproportionate number of faculty, members of the administrative staff, and board members who don't realize that no board responsibility is more important than the appointment of a president.[53]

Not only does the board not grasp the seriousness of the task, but, if the term "constituencies" replaces collegiality then a completely new profile of the search committee redefines the type of person to be hired:

> Too many presidents have turned out to be failures because trustees have allowed search and selection committees to choose a chief executive officer who could not challenge any of the constituencies represented.[54]

From the outset, a struggle emerges between the abdication of responsibility by the board through the notion of collegiality

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[52]Fisher, Board, 2.

[53]Ibid., 43.

[54]Vernon R. Alden, "Corporate Boss, College President," The Journal of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges 20.3 (1978): 17.

which is exacerbated by the actual creation of a panel of self-interested constituencies. This reflects a real need for the board to "think about its role in the relationship."[55] Because as one author has noted, "Authorities agree that the highest reponsibility of a board of trustees of a university is the selection of a president."[56]

During the interview process of a potential candidate, one trustee is quoted, "The Board never levels with the president, if we did, we'd never hire anyone."[57] The importance of information sharing between board and the presidential candidate is specious at best. This happens because:

> Candidates naturally want to put their best foot forward and search committees want to retain the best candidates in the pool, so neither individual nor institution may be sufficiently candid to provide the information each needs to make a good match and a propitious start.[58]

A major part of that "propitious start" is founded in the trust and honesty between the president and the board. It is in the negotiation process for the position, that McLaughlin and Riesman see a special need for candor from both sides:

> Negotiations between the prospective president and the board are critical because they determine what life will be like for the incumbent after installation...candidates

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[55]Clark Kerr and Marion L. Glade, The Guardians: Boards of Trustees of American Colleges and Universities (Washington, D.C.: Association of Governing Boards of Universities & Colleges, 1989) 45.

[56]Francis H. Horn, "The Job of the President," Liberal Education 33.4 (1982): 387.

[57]Glade., 15.

[58]Ibid.

> may be ...equally blinded by their own ambitions...that they remain misled by the false advertising (perhaps half-believed) of the search committee.[59]

Essentially what the board of directors must do is to find a way to reduce the "discrepancies between their (the presidents') expectations and their actual experiences."[60] Although Cohen and March say the "mismatch between expectations and reality is not news to presidents;"[61] however, it is news to new presidents. If the college presidency today is the toughest job in America, then why does there continue to exist such a large gap between the expectations and realities on both sides? The literature that has just been reviewed suffers from two shortcomings which must be addressed.

Limitations of the Literature

A major chasm exists between the practitioners and the researchers. On the one hand, Fisher, Flawn, Hesburgh, and Kaufmann et al write from a former president's perspective with very different views on the role of the president than the researchers. Researchers, like Bensimon, McLaughlin and Riesman, and Plante, see the president's role in terms of empowerment, with

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[59]Judith Block McLaughlin and David Riesman, Choosing a College President: Opportunities and Constraints (Lawrenceville, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990) 323.

[60]Kauffman, 167.

[61]Michael D. Cohen and James G. March, Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College Presidency, 2nd Edition (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1986) 123.

the term "collegiality" in the forefront. The practicioners call for a restoration of legitimacy of the president and the power of the president on college campuses.

Concerning the second issue, in most of the literature, both camps deal exclusively with leadership style and substance, the framework of the university's management philosophy, and the studies of how presidents operate on a day-to-day basis. In the literature, numerous quantitative studies on presidential traits and styles are available. In addition, the new breed of presidential researchers have turned to more ethnographic interview techniques to help explain the subject of presidential leadership.

Other than a few articles, detailed interviews with new college presidents have not been a priority of the researchers in the area of expectations and realities. Lawrence Cote has done major quantitative work in the expectations of presidents and board chairmen on the role of the president and found them in agreement on the theoretical issues: Vision, Trustee Rapport, Fund Raiser, and Financial Manager.[62] But, a major void exists in measuring the perceptions of the president going into the position, and the realities of the position in relationship to the culture, the personnel, the finances, and the role of the board.

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[62]Lawrence W. Cote, "The Relative Importance of Presidential Roles," The Journal of Higher Education 56.6 (1985): 664-676.

Summary

Further study needs to be done either quantitatively or qualitatively on the discrepancies between expectations and realities. Reaching out to the new college presidents for their input into what they found in the first several months and how they dealt with the issues should be made part of the literature. The literature has played it almost too safe in looking at leadership roles of the presidents. With the dramatic number of presidential turnovers in this country each year and the short tenure expectancy of each president, many more studies should be conducted. Kauffman approaches this challenge with:

> I am convinced that we could do more to help college and university presidents be more successful and happier. The job need not be so filled with role conflicts. Ways can be found to reduce the illusions and develop more rational realities.[63]

Unfortunately, in the last fifteen years, the study of the presidency has not lead to "ways of reducing the illusions."

Central to the inability of both the practicioner and the researcher in the study of the presidency is that the former looks for the board to reform or mcdernize itself and the latter, essentially all faculty, look for the president to get with their (faculty) agenda. Into this setting, perhaps, a non-educator could compile a proper perspective on the presidency with the burden of protecting oneself or an apology for one's life as not an impediment to the study.

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[63]Kauffman, 168.

The need to find the proper framework for evaluating the new college president might be found through the cultural lens of an organization. Turning to fiction, Kramer's study of the college presidents in literature says that in faculty authored novels the presidents receive their cruelest treatment. He further goes on to explain:

> ...the negative depictions of presidents in academic fiction might be explained less as portraits drawn from reality, and more as allegorical attacks upon administrative authority which presidents embody.[64]

Taking the allegory one step futher, it is quite possible that the Presidential mansion issue is a metaphor--part of the allegory. Could it be likely that in a literary construct the presidential home is just the use of anthropromorphism; instead of attacking the presidential persona, the attacks are directed at the mansion? Can the gap between board and faculty, and expectations and reality be truly addressed if the discussion takes place in a literary construct?

The allegories and metaphors aside, the need for understanding how new presidents arrive at this calling in their life and the ways of enlightening them to the environment they will encounter needs to be studied and published. This area is too important to not be addressed in realistic terms.

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[64]John Kramer, "College and University Presidents in Fiction," The Journal of Higher Education 50.1 (1981): 93.

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